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SUBJECT: TURKEY-GERMANY CONSULTATIONS ON IRAN, CAUCASUS AND
KOSOVO

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Turkish officials reportedly told visiting German PolDir Schaefer that PM Erdogan had given Iranian President Ahmadinejad the undiluted U.S./EU-3 message during their recent meetings in Baku and Bali. The GOT is convinced Iran seeks to develop a nuclear weapon and this is a threat to Turkey. The Germans got the impression that: Turkey would prefer to see direct U.S.-Iran talks, Turkey is not seeking a mediating role, and Turkish officials are not confident the U.S. will listen to its allies' counsel.

¶2. (C) Schaefer urged Turkish officials to considering opening the Turkey-Armenia border in the context of a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. On Kosovo, Turkey accepts an independence outcome but agrees with Germany that an independent Kosovo should not be permitted an army or UN membership right away. End Summary

Iran

¶3. (C) German Embassy PolCouns Helga Barth briefed us on German MFA Political Director Michael Schaefer's May 16-17 consultations in Ankara. Schaefer held wide-ranging talks with MFA Deputy Undersecretary Rafet Akgunay, and met as well with PM Erdogan's diplomatic advisor Ali Yakital and ruling AKP Vice Chair for foreign affairs Saban Disli. Schaefer briefed the Turks on the latest EU-3 package of incentives for Iran, describing it as "completely new, comprehensive, and attractive." Disli asked about U.S. reaction to the plan and Schaefer reportedly told him it enjoyed U.S. approval. Disli assured Schaefer that, in PM Erdogan's recent meetings with Ahmadinejad in Baku and Bali, Erdogan had not diluted the U.S./EU-3 message on Iran but had delivered it with full force. He said that Erdogan remained concerned that either Iran or the U.S. could seek to escalate the conflict and that Erdogan wants a meeting with President Bush in Washington to convey his concerns.

¶4. (C) According to the Germans, D/US Akgunay told Schaefer that the Iranian regime is totally focused on the U.S. and is using the nuclear issue to solidify domestic support. The Iranians cannot make concessions as they believe any compromise will be followed by additional Western demands. Akgunay said Larijani was extremely critical of the EU during his April visit to Ankara, stating that the EU has cheated Iran. Akgunay told the Germans the Iranians must not succeed in their attempt to divide the international community, particularly the Islamic countries from the West.

15. (C) Akgunay reportedly told Schaefer that the GOT is convinced the Iranians want a nuclear weapon, as they perceive they are now surrounded by U.S. allies, and stated that the GOT views this as a serious threat to Turkey. Meanwhile, U.S. intervention in Iraq has allowed the Iranians to expand their influence throughout the region as never before. The Turks see no viable military solution but believe engagement with Iran and finding a means for Iran to save face is the only reasonable strategy.

16. (C) Akgunay suggested to Schaefer that the GOT is not/not confident the U.S. will listen to the advice of its allies and avoid a military confrontation. PolCouns Barth said the German side came away with the impression that the GOT would like to see direct U.S.-Iran talks on the nuclear issue. The Turkish side told them it has no ambition to take on a mediating role in the dispute.

Caucasus

17. (C) In discussions on the aucasus, Akgunay assured Schaefer that Turkey would continue to encourage Russian helpfulness in dealing with Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Schaefer reportedly took the opportunity to press Akgunay to consider opening its border with Armenia as an incentive for Armenian agreement to an N-K settlement. Akgunay responded that an N-K settlement would facilitate negotiations on opening the border but that normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations depends on progress on bilateral issues.

Kosovo

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18. (C) Eastern Europe Department Head Hasan Asan reportedly told Schaefer that Turkey expects independence for Kosovo but is concerned about the effect on Serbia, especially following the Montenegrin independence vote. In this light, the GOT views direct Pristina-Belgrade talks as positive. With Kosovo's ethnic Turk minority in mind, Asan added that Turkey hopes the Kosovo constitution will acknowledge Kosovo's multiethnic character. PolCouns Barth told us that, in a separate conversation, Akgunay and Schaefer agreed that regional stability would be best served if an independent Kosovo is not permitted an army and UN membership in the short term.

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